

# **Wanted: Lots of (dependable) mentors**

**By Erika Chavez -- Bee Staff Writer**

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Thousands of children across California could benefit from mentors, advocates say, and schools and other organizations hope to sign up volunteers during January, which is National Mentoring Month.

The ongoing recruiting push seeks adults of all ages, but there is a greater need for male mentors, advocates agree.

Mentoring commitments in the Sacramento region can range from one lunch per week for a semester through a school-based program, to six hours per week for one year through Big Brothers Big Sisters. Whatever age group or time commitment a potential mentor has in mind, there are plenty of children whose needs will match, said Rhonda Staley-Brooks, executive director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Sacramento.

Most mentor programs run criminal background checks on applicants, and Big Brothers Big Sisters also checks fingerprints and driving records. Some require minimal training while others provide more extensive preparation.

Mentors can come from all walks of life, and income and employment status are irrelevant, Staley-Brooks said.

"They just have to be consistent and reliable," she said. "These kids come from backgrounds where they have been let down a lot. We want to make sure we're not adding someone else to their lives that will let them down. It's a commitment, and some of these friendships can last forever."

Below are some local mentoring programs in need of volunteers:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Sacramento: (916) 482-9300 or [www.bbbs-sac.org](http://www.bbbs-sac.org)
- Lunch Buddies at Parkway Elementary: (916) 433-7377 or (916) 752-3103

- Academic Mentoring Program, Sacramento City Unified School District: (916) 643-9262

- Office of Career and Educational Options, Elk Grove Unified School District: (916) 686-7726

For a listing of mentoring programs throughout the region and state, contact the Governor's Mentoring Partnership at (800) 879-2772 or [www.mentoring.ca.gov](http://www.mentoring.ca.gov).

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